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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#) [OSCE](#)
SUBJECT: NATO: JANUARY 31TH HLTF MEETING

REF: STATE 009292 HLTF GUIDANCE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Richard G. Olson, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

1. (C) SUMMARY. NATO Allies used the January 31 HLTF to reaffirm and refine their strategy for a unified NATO response to Russia,s decision to suspend implementation of CFE. Allies see themselves united behind a substantive approach (the parallel actions plan) and accompanying diplomatic game plan at least through the Bucharest Summit, although one can expect increased nervousness as we approach that point if we are still without agreement with Russia on the plan. Highlights:

-- Most Allies acknowledged that Russia was unlikely to negotiate seriously on a CFE solution prior to the Russian Presidential elections, and many registered doubts about what would be possible thereafter.

-- Allies view the NATO Bucharest Summit as the next decision point in the three-phased approach agreed by Allies for assessing and responding to the Russian suspension (reaction, observation and recording, and re-assessment and reaction/responding).

-- Allies welcomed U.S. ideas for fruitful use of the JCG to discuss concerns about the lack of Russian CFE data, register compliance concerns and respond (again) to Russia,s six concerns about CFE in a manner that supports on going bilateral efforts and discussions in the HLTF.

-- The next HLTF meeting is scheduled for February 28; Allies agreed to propose to Russia that we hold a NRC(ACE) on the same day as that HLTF. END SUMMARY.

CONTACTS AND BILATERAL MEETINGS

2. (C) The U.S. Representative, VCI DAS Karin L. Look, briefed Allies on the status of U.S.-Russia bilateral discussions and distributed the summary of recent Russian inputs to the updated parallel actions package contained in guidance (reftel). She noted that the only substantive development since Madrid was Russia,s decision to provide the U.S. with specific language for the Moldova portion. While fully consistent with positions Russia had articulated in Geneva and Madrid, the language was not likely to promote resolution. Look noted that the U.S. had, following receipt of the Russian text, incorporated it and provided an updated package to the foreign ministry on December 26; no reaction was received from Russia until January 14, when Russia

proposed that Assistant Secretary Fried and Russian MFA Director for Security and Disarmament Anatoly Antonov should meet at the end of the month. Due to scheduling difficulties, a meeting is likely during the week of February 18 in Washington. Look noted that while U.S. expectations for that meeting are modest, we will look for ways to engage in a meaningful discussion. She called attention to a question the Russians had raised regarding the possibility of a provisional application arrangement of CFE states if the parallel actions package had been agreed, and a majority of CFE states had actually ratified the Adapted Treaty (this was posed in the final tick of the paper contained reftel).

-- German Rep Biontino briefed on Foreign Minister Steinmeier,s meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on December 17, 2007. Steinmeier reiterated to Lavrov that Parliaments would only move forward with ratification of Adapted CFE in parallel with steps by Russia on fulfillment of its Istanbul commitments. Steinmeier noted that the "parallel actions package" is a good basis for negotiations. He urged that the discussions should concentrate on the core issues, meet on a more regular schedule, and include European Allies as well as the U.S. Biontino said Steinmeier urged Lavrov to consider a good faith gesture, like beginning work on documentary transfer of the Gudauta base to Georgia, or resumption of withdrawal of munitions from Moldova. He indicated that Lavrov rebuffed the idea of a schedule of meetings, appeared to be interested only in the U.S. bilateral channel, and showed no interest in gestures on Moldova and Georgia.

-- Turkey informed the HLTF that its Chief of the General Staff had sent a letter to Russian Chief of the General Staff Baluyevsky regarding Turkey,s position on the Flank Regime. Turkey believes that the flank limits are a vital, core element of the Treaty. Eliminating the flank is not acceptable and would create further problems for ratification by the Turkish parliament.

-- Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia reported on bilateral meetings with Russian arms control representative Ulyanov in Vienna in which Ulyanov reiterated Russia,s position of A/CFE now and without a flank regime for Russia or nothing at all, suggested that NATO should readjust their ceilings, and said that A/CFE is not possible without accession by the Baltic Allies and Slovenia.

-- France reported that Director of Disarmament Phillip Carre met with Russian MFA Director for Security and Disarmament Antonov in Moscow in December. Antonov said Russia was prepared for more discussions but was not prepared to make any decisions and that movement would not be possible until after the Presidential elections in early March. Carre responded that the "ball" was in Russia,s court and that the Parallel Actions Package was the best tool to move from the impasse.

--(SBU) Canada reported that on the eve of the HLTF it had sent to the CFE Treaty Depositary a note verbale on Russia,s "suspension" of CFE Treaty implementation.

-- The Chairman (NATO ASYG Erdmann) debriefed Allies on the NRC meeting held on January 30, noting that it was difficult to determine which ideas on CFE were official Russian positions, and which were Ambassador Rogozin,s personal views.

13. (C) THE OBSERVATION PHASE AND THE WAY AHEAD. As noted and described below, Allies endorsed the idea of continuing NATO implementation of the CFE Treaty at least until Bucharest noting that by April Allies would need to review their strategy. All agreed continued implementation must include continued NATO efforts to conduct CFE inspections in Russia (i.e. continue to ask for them), both to the end of this Treaty year and in Treaty year 2008 that begins mid-March. (NOTE: Despite the general theme of continuing full implementation, German Rep Biontino suggested Berlin had not yet decided whether to notify its upcoming quota

inspection of Russia, the only quota inspection remaining to NATO in this Treaty year. ENDNOTE). Allies agreed that it would be important to think creatively about how to use the NATO Summit, or the communiqué, to make progress.

14. (C) Discussion of NATO's game plan for getting to Bucharest keyed off of the I.S. Food for Thought Paper on "From Now to Bucharest- The HLTF and CFE" (HLTF-N((2008))005).

-- Germany (Biontino) opened discussion with a long intervention lamenting that a protracted Russian suspension might irrevocably erode the CFE regime. Criticism of the U.S. was barely veiled: there had been no bilateral meeting since Madrid, and Germany ("without blaming the U.S.") was concerned that the fate of the CFE Treaty hung in the balance of bilateral meeting schedules. Biontino repeated the prescription Steinmeier had proposed to Lavrov: CFE should be the focus of regular meetings including all the relevant parties, so it does not get put on the back burner. This theme of "inclusive" discussions won some adherents (Belgium, Greece, Italy); what Biontino did not say in the full plenary was that Germany's focus is on Key Allies plus 1 (the plus 1 is Russia) meetings, not meetings at 30 on the model of the Bad Saarow seminar they hosted. The role of the JCG should continue to include "constructive" ideas like a fact-finding trip to Gudauta, and other topics that would present a positive attitude for solution to include discussing provisional application.

-- Turkey (Gun) asked for views on paragraph 7 of the Food for Thought paper, which seemed to suggest a rather confusing Alliance decision schedule. Gun's idea was simply that NATO should continue on its current path to Bucharest, try to use the Summit effectively, and reassess afterward. Gun asked how Allies can best support the U.S. bilateral effort. Gun was skeptical about the value of a CFE Extraordinary Conference any time soon. With regard to the provisional application question raised by Russia (to the U.S.), Gun made clear that this was not something he was prepared to consider in the context of Russian proposals to abolish the flank regime.

-- The U.S. (Look) began the U.S. intervention by welcoming the benchmarks portion of the Food for Thought paper. She noted that it did not, however, mention the March 2 Russian elections and should. She urged that Allies continue to maintain their current, unified course in the run up to Bucharest: the package is a very generous deal for Russia and the best that the Alliance can support; it remains on the table and we hope Russia will work with us on it. In addition to remaining unified in support of the package, Allies should continue to demonstrate their commitment to CFE by seeking to implement it: including by requesting inspections in accordance with the inspection schedules for 2007 and 2008. Rep Look also recommended that we record Russian actions or inaction in the JCG, in order to maintain our legal rights and shape post-Bucharest decisions. She argued that Allies should be very reserved in FSC discussion of new CSBMs in Vienna, and seek to make effective use of the JCG and NRC-ACE to send our message to Russia.

-- France (Grand) noted that there was not much substance discussed in the JCG and that more could be done in the JCG-T to coordinate responses to Russia and Belarus. Like Biontino, Grand regretted that U.S.-Russian engagement had slowed for understandable reasons, and worried that circumstances, including Russia's inability to move forward prior to the elections, would be corrosive. Allies nodded when he quipped we can't get accustomed to "suspension." France commented on the need to keep Russia involved in the JCG keeping it positive and not making it into a bigger crisis. We should continue with the observation Phase (I) and seek to use the period between the Russian elections and Bucharest, as well as the Summit itself, to make progress. Concerning a CFE Extraordinary Conference, we should only agree to conduct another conference if we can manage the agenda: either we have a success to celebrate, or we hold a

conference to confirm that the Treaty is in "trouble." Regarding PD themes, France felt we needed more balance, by highlighting the positive results by giving our efforts a higher profile using diagrams and charts, and press with a pro-active program.

-- Netherlands, as it stated at the previous HLTF meeting, was very positive in its support for the "high ground" approach on implementation, and the parallel actions package, which however might require "fine tuning." In what was easily the most forward-looking intervention of the day, the Dutch argued that it was axiomatic that NATO should continue to implement the Treaty while seeking a solution with Russia.

We should seek to use Bucharest to make progress, and take stock afterward. Taking stock should include reviewing the detailed record of Russian non-compliance. NATO should consider whether some form of retaliatory steps were called for, but no decision should be taken in haste. If we want to retaliate, we need to consider all the consequences first, most particularly what the implications of any steps would actually be on our ability to preserve the Treaty. The idea of a CFE Extraordinary Conference also needed to be reviewed in that light: what would it achieve? NATO Allies can alter our strategy and negotiations as required. The Dutch Rep closed with his main message, which resonated within the group: any actions we choose to take on CFE should be taken by the Alliance as a whole, through a decision process that can produce a consensus all could stand by.

-- Italy suggested utilizing the JCG more extensively in order to maintain the dialogue for a solution. If another EC was required, it should be later. Italy also agreed that the PD program should be proactive and aimed at thorough explanations of the NATO position.

-- Belgium urged Allies to continue using all forums available to continue the dialogue with Russia, which includes the Open Skies Consultative Commission, the JCG, and FSC. However, in the FSC, Allies should not discuss CSBMs that would reflect measures that are contained in the CFE Treaty or Agreement on Adaptation. Belgium joined Turkey in making clear that with so many issues unresolved, it was too early to discuss provisional application.

-- U.S. Rep Look intervened for the second time to underscore that the U.S. approached the bilateral exchange with Russia in a constructive and positive spirit. The immediate prospects may not look bright, but we continue to do everything we can to achieve success. Our detailed briefings to Allies in the HLTF are an attempt to share and cross-fertilize ideas with Allies as we progress to settling the impasse. Regarding the role of the JCG, Look noted that the JCG is an excellent venue to discuss the vital information left out of the aggregate data Russia provided in lieu of its required annual information exchange. The JCG could also readdress the Russian six concerns using the 2008 data as the basis for rebutting those concerns, and call on Russia to explain its public statements regarding plans to change its force posture. What the JCG should not do is attempt to break up the parallel action package. The U.S. had taken to heart a basic message from all Allies: the elements of the package could not be discussed or pursued piecemeal. The package could only be agreed as a unit. In supporting the public diplomacy program, U.S. rep Look highlighted how our responses would provide a visible measure that sends a powerful message through various media lines.

-- Romania (Micula) acknowledged that Russia is attempting to renegotiate measures in CFE, CSBM, and naval activities in the Black Sea, which it has sought in the past fifteen years and has not found success. Micula encouraged universal responses from all NATO Allies to not compensate Russia for its bad behavior. Romania's parliament would never agree to provisional application as long as Russia is non-compliant with Treaty obligations. Micula supported and urged Allies not to split the parallel actions package through negotiations in the JCG. In closing, Micula supported a robust public diplomacy program that was proactive in nature.

-- Bulgaria noted that Russian issues associated with the flank, provisional application, lower NATO ceilings, naval additions, and proposing a new Treaty would prevent provisional application, even with a revised parallel action package. Bulgaria cautioned Allies to the Russian tactic of dividing the issues for discussion by small groups. Russia is seeking to divide the Alliance.

-- The Czech Republic (Zvonkova), in an attempt to counter some of the "soft statements," spoke of more stringent measures against Russia such as not allowing Russia to attend implementation Working Group meetings in Vienna. The Czechs urged Germany to request the only remaining quota inspection to Russia as soon as possible. (NOTE: Germany (Biontino) responded that the decision to conduct the quota inspection was a political one and that decision has not been made. We don't know if this was a personal view or something larger. It had no support from the larger group. END NOTE).

-- Norway (Lokens) vigorously supported the U.S. efforts and thanked us for our transparency. However, Lokens questioned how long would the Alliance stay in Phase I (observation of Russia) before we moved onto the next phase. Norway supported the idea presented by the U.S. to have a NRC (ACE) with Russia following the next HLTF. Norway too was skeptical of the utility of calling another EC and agreed to cautiously discuss provisional application only after Russia has agreed to a solution: "the parallel actions package or a variation."

-- Greece proclaimed that the Summit was not a deadline for a final decision. It had hopes to keep CFE on the NRC agenda at NATO (support from Italy), and it made good sense to discuss provisional application as Belarus had proposed in the JCG.

-- Spain was short and to the point that it supported the German drumbeat for "inclusiveness" and for discussion of provisional application in the JCG. (NOTE: What some may have not understood, since Germany did not go into greater detail, was that "inclusiveness" is actually a "Key Allies plus one" with Russia as the plus one. END NOTE).

-- Canada (Arpin), the United Kingdom, and Hungary followed with strong support for the parallel actions package, a robust public diplomacy package, and for Allies to continue to implement the CFE Treaty at least until Bucharest. Hungary emphasized that the Allies should take every advantage to use each forum to our advantage and we should be "considering steps now that we may want to take down the road."

-- France (Grand) also intervened for a second time agreeing with the point that we should not be looking at CSBMs in the FSC that reflects substance of the CFE Treaty or adapted Treaty. Grand noted that the Alliance cannot allow Russia to take the &moral high ground& and criticized its attitude. France also agreed with many others who did not support the use of new informal seminars like that in Bad Saarow and Paris.

15. (C) Raising NATO's Profile in the Fields of Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation. Germany, the U.S., Italy, UK stated that the text would be studied and commented on later as Allies had only received the text within the past 12 hours. France noted that the paper needed some work on the way it was written, and Belgium, Bulgaria, and Romania thought it was a good paper. Turkey also liked the paper and emphasized the importance of paragraph 9 of the text. The HLTF Chairman (Erdmann) announced a final version would be circulated but did not mention a proposed date.

16. (SBU) Next Meeting. Allies agreed to the IS proposal for the next meeting to be held on 28 February in the morning followed in the afternoon by an NRC-ACE. When discussion moved to the March meeting, many Allies balked at agreeing to 27 March since it would interfere with scheduled Easter

holiday observances. Germany discounted such excuses noting that the NATO summit was the next week and that a meeting in late March could be used to finalize any Summit Declaration language on CFE.

17. (C) Bilateral Discussions. U.S. Rep Look and her delegation conducted bilateral meetings prior to the HLTF with Canada, Turkey, Norway, the UK and Romania. France hosted the Key Allies meeting (UK, GE, FR, and U.S.).

-- Turkey (Gun) said Turkey was open to future use of the "like-minded" group for discussion, but was reserved on using such a group at NATO HQ; in any case Turkey did not want this to substitute for U.S.-Turkish bilateral exchanges. Gun informed us that the Chief of the Turkish General Staff had written a letter to Russian Chief of the General Staff Baluyevsky explaining Turkish views on the flanks and "suspension", and that Turkey recently sent a note verbale to the CFE Depositary (the Netherlands). Turkey strongly supports the U.S. leading the negotiations with Russia. U.S. Rep Look informed Gun that a date during the week of 18 February was most likely for a follow-on Fried-Antonov discussion. The U.S. also handed Turkey a copy of the summary of the December 26 proposal letter the U.S. had sent to Russia, which others received at the HLTF. In an aside on the margins of the HLTF, Gun asked Look if Turkey could get a copy of the December 26 text of the Parallel Actions Plan. She said she would pass that request to A/S Fried.

-- Norway (Lokens), which requested the meeting, discussed the issues of concern which included the bilateral negotiations, a meeting of the like minded, and U.S. thoughts on the next steps we felt Allies should be taking. Look also delivered a copy of the summary of the December 26 proposal letter the U.S. had sent to Russia, which others received at the HLTF. Norway was curious if our flank position had changed and if we thought Russia was serious about negotiating a solution to the CFE impasse. Norway continues to give the U.S. strong support on the parallel actions package.

-- Romania (Micula) continues to be a strong supporter of the U.S. led parallel actions package negotiations and inquired how the U.S. sees the game plan unfolding. Micula was curious of the timing in which each phase of the NATO agreed three-phase approach started and ended. Romania supports our push for Allies to continue to ask for opportunities to conduct CFE inspections in Russia as well as most all the ideas identified in the U.S. guidance.

18. (C/NF) Dinner with the UK Reps. U.S. Rep Look, Laurendeau and Schultz had dinner with UK Rep Ford and Gare. In addition to a lengthy discussion of how to deal with our German colleagues and the related matter of post-Bucharest challenges, the main item discussed at dinner was the legal issues summary associated with actions being looked at "down the road." Ford thanked Look for the short summary that STATE-Legal Branch had provided and responded that he (Ford) would coordinate the legal issues presented in the summary with the UK legal experts who were thought to have frequent discussion with U.S. legal experts.

19. (C) The Key Allies Meeting. Germany wants the U.S.-Russia bilateral negotiations to become an "all-inclusive" negotiation. Germany defines "all inclusive," as the Key Allies plus Russia. France supported this idea but challenged a German assertion that wider "inclusion" should also be considered. France made a strong statement that "we can't get used to suspension," and Germany wants a collective approach for a step-by-step approach with benchmarks to solve the impasse. All seemed to agree for the present to continue with the proposed game plan to Bucharest. It is after Bucharest that has created some concern. France (Grand) also reported that France and other unspecified members of the European Union had received a very anti-Romanian letter from Moldovan President Voronin, who complained about Romania meddling in Moldova's interests, which was also unspecified. Germany eluded the question in the Key Allies and in the Plenary when

asked if it would seek to conduct its scheduled CFE section VII (quota) inspection in Russia. Germany would only make reference that the decision was a political one and it has not been made. The Key Allies agreed to recommend an NRC(ACE) to be conducted after the February 28 HLTF meeting.

NULAND